

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 13473 01 OF 03 122121Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HEW-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 HA-05 /075 W
-----035490 122149Z /21

R 122105Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2981
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MOSCOW 13473

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UR
SUBJECT: REPORTS OF WIDESPREAD AGITATION IN ABKHAZI
AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC

REF: MOSCOW 11004(NOTAL)

SUMMARY: WE HAVE HEARD FROM SEVERAL UNOFFICIAL SOVIET
CONTACTS OF WIDESPREAD AGITATION AMONG THE ABKHAZI
RESIDENTS OF THE ABKHAZI AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC (AR) IN
CONNECTION WITH PASSAGE OF THE ABKHAZI AR CONSTITUTION.
ACCORDING TO ONE DETAILED BUT SECOND-HAND ACCOUNT, AS
MANY AS 30,000 ABKAZIS GATHERED IN THE AR CAPITAL OF
SUKHUMI AROUND MAY 21 TO MAKE SPECIFIC DEMANDS, INCLUDING
TRANSFER OF THE AR FROM GEORGIA TO THE RSFSR
AND ENDING STATUS OF GEORGIAN AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 13473 01 OF 03 122121Z

OF THE AR. TWO OTHER UNOFFICIAL SOURCES CORROBORATE
THE GENERAL OUTLINE OF THIS ACCOUNT. ONE SOURCE HAS
PROVIDED US WITH A COPY OF THE ABKHAZI AR NEWSPAPER
"SOVETSKAYA ABKHAZIYA" FOR MAY 23, WHICH ALSO PARTIALLY
CORROBORATES THE ACCOUNT. ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, IT
SEEMS CLEAR THAT A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF ABKHAZIS
KICKED UP A MAJOR FUSS, WHICH WAS RELATED TO THE NEW

AR CONSTITUTION AND APPARENTLY MOTIVATED BY ABKHAZI NATIONALISM. END SUMMARY.

1. AN UNOFFICIAL SOVIET SOURCE, WHO HAD NO APPARENT REASON TO MISLEAD US, RECENTLY TOLD US THAT A CLOSE FRIEND OF HIS WAS VACATIONING IN SUKHUMI WHEN A MAJOR DEMONSTRATION OF ABKHAZI NATIONALISM TOOK PLACE THERE. THE STORY GOES AS FOLLOWS:

--ON OR ABOUT MAY 21 APPROXIMATELY 30,000 ABKHAZIS, MANY DRESSED IN NATIONAL COSTUME, GATHERED IN THE AR CAPITAL CITY OF SUKHUMI TO MAKE NATIONALISTIC DEMANDS IN CONNECTION WITH AR-WIDE "DISCUSSION" OF THE AR'S CONSTITUTION;

--MANY DEMANDED THAT THE ABKHAZI AR BE LEGALLY SHIFTED FROM THE GEORGIAN REPUBLIC TO THE RSFSR; ANOTHER POPULAR DEMAND WAS THAT ABKHAZI BE MADE THE ONLY OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE AR; OTHER DEMANDS INVOLVED CREATION OF AN ABKHAZI UNIVERSITY, BUILDING A LOCAL TELEVISION TRANSMITTER AND CONSTRUCTING A MODERN HIGHWAY;

--LOCAL AUTHORITIES REPORTEDLY DECIDED TO ATTEMPT TO PACIFY THE CROWD BY PLAYING A TAPE OF GEORGIAN REPUBLIC PARTY BOSS SHEVARDNADZE DELIVERING A CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 13473 01 OF 03 122121Z

CONCILIATORY SPEECH, BUT IRATE ABKHAZIS SNAPPED SOME CRITICAL WIRES AND RENDERED THE TAPE MACHINE INOPERATIVE;

--AT AN UNSPECIFIED TIME AFTER THAT, SHEVARDNADZE ATTEMPTED TO ADDRESS THE CROWD IN PERSON; HE SAID HE WOULD SPEAK TO THE ABKHAZIS AS "AN HONEST MAN", WHICH EVOKED LOUD, DERISIVE WHISTLES FROM THE CROWD; HE NEXT SAID HE WOULD SPEAK "AS A COMMUNIST", AT WHICH POINT THE WHISTLING WAS SO LOUD HE HAD TO LEAVE THE PODIUM;

--THEN CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE SECRETARY KAPITONOV, WHO APPARENTLY FLEW TO SUKHUMI TO COPE WITH THIS PROBLEM, ADDRESSED THE CROWD; ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE, KAPITONOV CLAIMED THAT LEONID IL'ICH BREZHNEV PERSONALLY WAS FOLLOWING EVENTS IN THE ABKHAZI AR; KAPITONOV SAID THAT A LOCAL TV TRANSMITTER WAS ALREADY UNDER CONSTRUCTION, THE HIGHWAY WOULD BE BUILT, AND A LOCAL INSTITUTE WOULD BE ELEVATED TO UNIVERSITY STATUS; BUT THE ABKHAZI AR COULD NOT BE TRANSFERRED FROM GEORGIA TO THE RSFSR.

2. AT THIS POINT, ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE'S FRIEND, THE CROWD SAT DOWN AND REFUSED TO MOVE UNTIL AN ABKHAZI CONSTITUTION WERE PASSED WHICH WAS SATISFACTORY TO THE ABKHAZI PEOPLE. AS NIGHT BEGAN TO FALL, A LOCAL AUTHORITY ANNOUNCED OVER THE PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM THAT PASSAGE OF THE AR'S CONSTITUTION HAD BEEN POSTPONED INDEFINITELY, AND THE ABKHAZIS

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 13473 02 OF 03 122128Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HEW-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 HA-05 /075 W
-----035524 122150Z /21

R 122105Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2982
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 MOSCOW 13473

MIGHT AS WELL GO HOME. THEY GRADUALLY DID SO.

3. THE NEXT DAY, THE STORY CONTINUES, LARGE NUMBERS OF MVD TROOPS, MANY DRESSED AS MILITIAMEN, APPEARED IN SUKHUMI, ALONG WITH A SIZEABLE FORCE OF MVD OR KGB PLAINCLOTHESMEN. MANY OF THE MILITIA WERE ARMED WITH SUBMACHINE GUNS. OUR SOURCE SAID HIS FRIEND SAW A PLAINCLOTHESMAN APPROACH FOUR ABKHAZIS SITTING ON A PARK BENCH TO REQUEST, POLITELY, THAT THEY "DISPERSE". (THEY DID).

4. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE'S FRIEND, THE ABKHAZI AR NEWSPAPER WAS NOT PUBLISHED THE

DAY AFTER THE DEMONSTRATION. ON THE NEXT DAY, HOWEVER, THE PAPER APPEARED, AND HAD THE NERVE TO CHARACTERIZE THE DEMONSTRATION AS A MEETING OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 13473 02 OF 03 122128Z

"AKTIV" OF THE ABKHAZI OBLAST PARTY ORGANIZATION. THE FRIEND ALSO MENTIONED ONE LOCAL RUMOR THAT THE DEMONSTRATION HAD BEEN ORGANIZED BY THE SON OF A FAMOUS ABKHAZI HISTORIAN.

5. SHORTLY AFTER WE WERE GIVEN THE ABOVE ACCOUNT, WE RECEIVED A SECOND AND LESS DETAILED VERSION OF THE SAME STORY FROM ANOTHER UNOFFICIAL SOVIET SOURCE, WHO HAD HEARD ABOUT THE ABKHAZI DEMONSTRATION FROM GEORGIAN FRIENDS IN MOSCOW. THIS SOURCE ALSO MENTIONED THE FIGURE "30,000" IN CHARACTERIZING THE SIZE OF THE DEMONSTRATION. SOURCE UNDERSTOOD THAT AT LEAST SOME ABKHAZIS WANTED THEIR AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC TO BE AFFILIATED NOT ONLY WITH THE RSFSR, BUT WITH THE MOSCOW OBLAST OF THE RSFSR, BECAUSE THEY WANTED UNIMPEDED ACCESS TO THE CITY OF MOSCOW AS THE BEST MARKET FOR THEIR ORANGES, OLIVES AND OTHER HIGH-DEMAND PRODUCTS.

6. A THIRD SOURCE, WHO WORKS IN AN INSTITUTE IN THE ABKHAZI AR CITY OF GAGRA, PROVIDED US WITH A COPY OF THE ABKHAZI AR NEWSPAPER FOR MAY 23, WHICH DESCRIBES THE "OBLAST CP AKTIV" MEETING. THIS SOURCE HAD THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ABOUT THE SITUATION IN THE AR:

--THE PASSAGE OF A NEW AR CONSTITUTION GAVE ABKHAZI NATIONALISTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO LAUNCH A MAJOR LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGN IN SUPPORT OF A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TRANSFERRING THE AR FROM GEORGIA TO THE RSFSR;

--THIS CAMPAIGN, WHICH TOOK PLACE FROM FEBRUARY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 13473 02 OF 03 122128Z

THROUGH APRIL, REPORTEDLY WAS SUPPORTED --OR AT LEAST NOT ACTIVELY OPPOSED --BY ABKHAZI OBLAST PARTY BOSS B.V. ADLEYBA, WHO OUR SOURCE BELIEVES MAY NOW BE UNDER INVESTIGATION IN THIS CONNECTION;

--THIS SOURCE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE SECESSIONISTS

WANTED TO AFFILIATE WITH THE RSFSR, RATHER THAN WITH
GEORGIA, ON THE THEORY THAT MOSCOW AS FURTHER
AWAY THAN TBILISI;

--THE SECESSIONISTS REPORTEDLY WERE CONCERNED
OVER GEORGIAN EXPLOITATION OF THE ABKHAZI AR'S
ECONOMIC RESOURCES (HEALTH RESORTS, PRIVATE
AGRICULTURAL PLOTS AND RENTAL DACHAS, AND TOBACCO
AND CITRUS FRUIT INDUSTRIES), AS WELL AS OVER
GEORGIAN CULTURAL DOMINATION, PARTICULARLY IN THE
AREAS OF RELIGION AND LANGUAGE.

7. (BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED) THE MAY 23 ISSUE OF
"SOVETSKAYA ABKHAZIYA" (COPIES BEING POUCHED TO
EUR/SOV AND MUNICH) GENERALLY CORROBORATE THE
ABOVE ACCOUNTS. FOR EXAMPLE:

--THE UPPER RIGHT-HAND CORNER OF THE PAPER'S FRONT
PAGE CONTAINS A DECREE POSTPONING INDEFINITELY
THE ABKHAZI AR SUPREME SOVIET SESSION SCHEDULED
FOR MAY 26 (WHICH UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD HAVE CONSIDERED
THE AR'S DRAFT CONSTITUTION);

--THE PAPER ANNOUNCES A MAY 21 MEETING OF "THE
AKTIV OF THE ABKHAZI OBLAST ORGANIZATION OF THE
GEORGIAN CP" AT WHICH OBKOM FIRST SECRETARY ADLEYBA,
KAPITONOV, AND GEORGIAN REPUBLIC FIRST SECRETARY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 13473 03 OF 03 122134Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HEW-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 HA-05 /075 W
-----035555 122150Z /21

R 122105Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2983
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 MOSCOW 13473

(AMONG OTHERS) SPOKE; THE SPEECHES OF ADLEYBA AND KAPITONOV ARE PRINTED, BUT THE PAPER CARRIES NOTHING FURTHER REGARDING SHEVARDNADZE'S ALLEGED SPEECH;

--ALTHOUGH "SOVETSKAYA ABKHAZIYA" CLAIMS THAT THE MEETING "UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED" THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION, LOCAL PARTY BOSS ADLEYBA IS REPORTED AS NOTING IN HIS SPEECH THAT DISCUSSION OF THE DRAFT ELICITED "SEPARATE, UNACCEPTABLE SUGGESTIONS," AND THOSE PUTTING FORWARD SUCH PROPOSALS "DO NOT TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS OF OUR LIFE, THE COMPOSITION OF THE ABKHAZI AR'S POPULATION;

--ANOTHER SPEAKER NOTES THE PROPOSAL, OF "A VERY WIDE-SPREAD NATURE," TO ADD AN ARTICLE ON THE AR'S TRANSFER FROM ONE REPUBLIC TO ANOTHER;
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 13473 03 OF 03 122134Z

--IN HIS SPEECH (ALSO PRINTED IN THE GOERGIAN REPUBLIC PAPER "ZARYA VOSTOKA" FOR MAY 26), KAPITONOV STATES THAT THE ABKHAZI AR CANNOT BE TRANSFERRED FROM GEORGIA BECAUSE THIS WOULD NOT CONFORM WITH PROVISIONS OF THE NEW USSR CONSTITUTION, AND GEORGIAN CANNOT BE REMOVED AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE AR BECAUSE THIS WOULD "FUNDAMENTALLY CONTRADICT THE LENINIST NATIONALITY POLICY OF OUR PARTY";

--KAPITONOV NOTES THAT SHEVARDNADZE PLACED A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS BEFORE THE CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE ABKHAZI AR, AND AS CONCERNS "A UNIVERSITY, TELEVISION AND SO FORTH," ASSISTANCE FROM ALL-UNION ORGANS WILL CERTAINLY BE RENDERED "WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF EXISTING POSSIBILITIES." (END UNCLASSIFIED).

8. COMMENT: ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT A MAJOR DEMONSTRATION TOOK PLACE IN SUKHUMI ALONG THE LINES DESCRIBED IN THE FIRST ACCOUNT WE RECEIVED. IN RETROSPECT, FURTHER CORROBORATION OF TROUBLES IN THE ABKHAZI AR WAS GIVEN US BY A SOVIET MINISTRY OF HEALTH OFFICIAL, WHO EXPLAINED THE LAST-MINUTE CANCELLATION OF A TRIP TO SOCHI AND SUKHUMI, SCHEDULED FOR MID-MAY FOR THE ADVANCE PARTY FOR HEW SECRETARY CALIFANO'S TRIP TO THE USSR,

AS DUE TO "SEVERAL DISTURBANCES OF A LOCAL
CHARACTER" (REFTEL). TOON

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, CIVIL DISORDERS, PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MOSCOW13473
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X4
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780245-0856
Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780670/aaaacibn.tel
Line Count: 334
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 53c2568b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 MOSCOW 11004
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2394081
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REPORTS OF WIDESPREAD AGITATION IN ABKHAZI AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/53c2568b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014